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ABSTRACT

The chief aim of this style manual is to promote clarity and consistency in writing for publication. The chapters are intended to help writers understand the publication process that begins with a need to communicate with a particular audience and ends with the distribution of the finished product. The first chapter on planning and producing a publication covers such topics as what must be edited, the anatomy of a publication, correspondence, and copyright considerations. The second chapter on mechanics covers such topics as capitalization, numbers, abbreviations, plurals, spelling, and underlining, while the third chapter on punctuation looks at the use of commas, semicolons, dashes, parentheses, quotation marks, hyphens, and ellipsis marks. The final chapter, on clear writing, treats the following subjects: agreement of subject and verb, agreement of pronoun and antecedent, pronoun reference, reflexive pronouns, case of pronouns, parallel structure, dangling modifiers, and tips on clear writing. (HOD)

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STYLE MANUAL

a guide to writing and producing publications

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
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Thanks also to the Georgia Department of Education for permission to borrow certain design features and to other state education agencies who sent us copies of their style manuals as guides in producing this one.

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Clarity and Consistency

Clarity and consistency in departmental writing are the chief aims of this style manual.

Communicating effectively with the public—and among ourselves—has never been more important than it is today. Our ability to communicate is eroded by vague, highly abstract writing; by word choices that always favor the fancy word over the plain; by a grammar that leaves the reader puzzled; and by publications that are dull and unattractive. The manual is published to help you prepare written materials that are clear in their message and consistent with other departmental publications in their style.

The manual will also help you understand the publication process that begins with a need to communicate with a particular audience and ends with the finished product distributed to your intended readers. Editors in the Office of Public Information and Publications can help you through the publication steps, and even take on some of the specific tasks required. But because you understand better than anyone the purpose of your publication, you will benefit from being knowledgeably involved each step of the way.

Remember, the job of the editor is to help communicate your message, not alter it. That fact places a responsibility on both of you — on you to write so that your meaning is at least discoverable and on the editor to preserve your message.

Editors in the Office of Public Information and Publications will be happy to try to answer questions you may have that are not answered in this manual. You may also wish to consult the references listed on page 25.

The *Style Manual* will be revised periodically. We welcome your comments and suggestions.

Planning and Producing a Publication

THINK ABOUT IT

Before you put your pen to paper, you should have decided that the publication you have in mind is really necessary. Ask yourself these questions:

- What do I want to communicate? Keep that objective before you as you plan and organize your manuscript.

- Who wants the publication? Who needs it? Is that audience large enough to justify a publication?
- How much money do I have to spend? What limitations does my budget put on the production and distribution of the publication?
- How am I going to get the publication into the hands of the people I hope will read it?

WHAT MUST BE EDITED

In your own interest and that of the department, you are required to submit for approval and editing any material in print or non-print form scheduled to go outside the department in multiple copies. Specifically, this requirement applies to the types of materials listed below.

booklets

newsletters

manuals

reports

tests

brochures

directories

handbooks

curriculum guides

posters

flyers

promotional literature

decals

bumper stickers

letters for multiple distribution that require the Superintendent's signature

press releases

public displays

exhibits and bulletin boards

radio and television public service announcements

public relations campaigns

letters submitted for publication on departmental stationery

For further information refer to MSDE Policy Numbers 01.300 and 01.300.03.

TALK TO YOUR EDITOR

Involve the department editor assigned to your division at the earliest stage of planning. It will often mean a better job, lower costs, and faster service for the publication.

Remember, too, that publications take time — usually months. Too little time to do the job right adds expense and often results in an inferior product. You should get started early, be available when your editor has questions about your manuscript, and read and return galleys and proofs promptly.

Some things you will want to consider with your editor:

- Decisions on quantity, size, and distribution of your publication. Your editor can help by assuring cost effectiveness and advising you on the most efficient page size and number of copies to meet your needs realistically. Are the mailing lists you plan to use up to date? Are there other ways to distribute? Will you want individual mailings or bulk distribution? Will you want to include a cover letter with bulk distribution?

- Budget — Your budget is a determining factor as to whether your publication will be typeset or typed in the department. Design and artwork — drawings, sketches, photographs — are often costly and must be carefully considered.

PREPARE YOUR MANUSCRIPT

Prepare at least two double-spaced copies of your manuscript. Never submit your only copy for editing. Be sure you've said what you want to say, how you want to say it, before sending the manuscript to be typeset or typed.

Your editor will take the completed manuscript and edit it to ensure maximum readability and conformity with department style. An editor will make no substantive or content changes without discussing them thoroughly with you.

When your manuscript comes back from the typist or typesetter, don't try to proofread it alone. Accurate proofreading takes two people —one to read aloud from the new copy and one to hold the original manuscript. And remember, this is not the time to make fresh changes. At this stage they become expensive.

ANATOMY OF A PUBLICATION

The following should be considered as basic parts of a publication. Some are required, some are optional. Those marked by an asterisk are required.

- Title page* — name of publication, name of department and division, and date
- Table of Contents*
- Board of Education*
- Statement of Nondiscrimination*
- Acknowledgements
- Foreword
- Preface
- Introduction
- Body — Text*
- Reference matter — appendix, glossary, bibliography and index

When listing the members of the State Board of Education, you may also list the name of the assistant superintendent of the division sponsoring the publication, plus the names of the branch chief and staff persons or consultants most directly responsible for the publication.

FOOTNOTES AND BIBLIOGRAPHIES

In some formal manuscripts and reports, footnotes and bibliographies are necessary. See the *Chicago Manual of Style* or *A Manual for Writers* by Kate L. Turabian.

CORRESPONDENCE

Whether you use the block, semiblock, or indented style, you should be consistent within the letter and on the envelope. Attention to form, style, and tone is important in a business letter. It should follow a conventional form and be courteous, direct, and concise without being stiff or abrupt.

Below is an example of a letter from the Superintendent. Note that the close is "Sincerely" and that the name is typed in all caps. In letters from other staff members, "Sincerely" or "Sincerely yours" may be used and the name is typed with initial caps only.

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MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
200 WEST BALTIMORE STREET
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND 21201
(301) 659-2101

April 12, 1983

The Honorable Edgar J. Burns
Governor of Maryland
State House
Annapolis, MD 21404

Dear Governor Burns:

The Maryland State Department of Education will apply for the funds allocated under the provisions of P.L. 95-207, the Career Education Incentive Act.

The allocated funds will be used in accordance with P.L. 95-207 and the State Plan for Career Education, which was adopted by the State Board of Education in February 1983. In addition, these funds, authorized for the next five years, will support the implementation of the World of Work area of this department's Project Basic.

Information on the status of career education will be included in the Annual Report of the State Department of Education.

Sincerely,

CHARLES B. ADAMS
State Superintendent of Schools

CBA:pm
cc: Dr. Elizabeth Lau
Mr. Edward McElvenney

ASSURING EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IN PRINCIPLE AND PRACTICE

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For information and application forms for obtaining a copyright, see the Office of Public Information and Publications.

Mechanics

CAPITALIZATION

1. **Capitalize proper nouns (particular person, place or thing) and adjectives derived from them.**
   Robert Luchinsky
   Congress—Congressional committee
   Philadelphia
   Thomas Jefferson Middle School
2. **Capitalize titles when they precede names.**
   Superintendent Barbara Jones
   Assistant State Superintendent Matthew Edwards

   Use lower case in titles following names or standing alone except titles of the highest distinction.
   Jonathan Bernstein, State Superintendent of Schools
   the Deputy Superintendent of Schools
   Roberta Phillips, branch chief
   Fred Johnson, assistant state superintendent

   Use lower case in occupational titles
   teacher Mark White
3. **Capitalize geographical place names.**
   Maryland
   Washington County

   Use lower case in state, county, or city unless they are part of a name.
   the State of Maryland
   teachers in the state
   Kent County
   schools in the county
4. **Capitalize points of the compass when they refer to recognized sections of state, country, or world.**
   the Southwest, the Far East, the West, Eastern Shore

   Use lower case for points of the compass when they are not part of a recognized section or when they refer merely to direction.
   eastern Maryland
   My flight west took four hours.
5. **Capitalize the full name of legislative, administrative, and judicial departments, bureaus, and offices.**
   the General Assembly of Maryland, the Maryland House of Delegates, the Maryland State Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Frederick County Board of Education, Support Services Branch, the Bureau of the Census, District Court of Maryland.

Capitalize *State Board of Education* and *State Department of Education.*

Use lower case for incomplete designations.
house of delegates, county board of education, board of education, the department (including MSDE), the branch, the court, juvenile court

Capitalize *House* when referring to the U.S. House of Representatives.

6. **Capitalize full names of institutions, universities, colleges, and schools within universities.**
the University of Maryland; the School of Education
Smithsonian Institution

Use lower case for incomplete references.
the university, the school, the institution

7. **Capitalize full names of associations, organizations, unions, commissions, conferences.**
Maryland State Teachers Association
Twenty-Fifth Annual Conference of the Maryland State Council of Parents and Teachers
the Commission on Quality Teaching

Use lower case for incomplete names.
the teachers association
the annual conference

8. **Capitalize days of the week and months.**
October, Wednesday

Use lower case for seasons, centuries, and decades.
spring, summer
the eighties
twenty-first century

9. **Capitalize each word in a title or heading except prepositions with four or fewer letters; always capitalize the last word.**
Democracy Through Education
The Votes Are In
The Public School Laws of Maryland
How To Communicate With Parents ("*To*" here is part of an infinitive and not a preposition.)

In typeset periodicals such as newsletters, headlines may be consistently written as sentences and capitalized accordingly.
Board orders closing of three schools

10. **Capitalize the first word of a quotation following a colon.**
In announcing the establishment of the task force, the Superintendent made the following statement: "Nothing this department undertakes this year will be more important to the future of public schools in this state."

Lower case the first letter of other sentences following colons.

11. **Capitalize the first words of a direct quotation.**
According to Ms. Jones, "It is a necessary first step."

Use lower case for a portion of a quoted statement when it is embedded in a sentence.
Ms. Jones called the study "a necessary first step."

12. **Capitalize Special Education, Vocational Education, and similar names of areas of education only when referring to the title of a specific program or departmental unit.**
Special Education is one of eight divisions within the department.

Vocational Education for Educable Students is a new project in the county.

Do not capitalize special education, vocational education, and similar names when used to refer to the general areas.
The new board president believes that all students should have opportunities to receive training in vocational education programs.

UNDERLINING (Italics)

1. **Underline titles of separate publications such as books, bulletins, magazines, newspapers; titles of movies, musical productions, and works of art; names of ships and aircraft; words, letters, or figures spoken of as such; and foreign words and phrases.**
"Teacher Involvement" is an important chapter in School Policy: Alcohol and Other Drugs.
Each morning he scans copies of the Baltimore Sun and the Washington Post.
What is the derivation of telephone?

Typesetters will generally use italics for words underlined in typewritten manuscripts. Bold face type may also be used.

2. **Underlining (italics) to emphasize a word or group of words should be used sparingly.**
Emphasis is best achieved through sentence structure. For example, words placed at the beginning or end of a sentence have more emphasis than those in the middle. Sentences written in the active voice are more emphatic than those written in the passive. And short sentences add emphasis.

ABBREVIATIONS

1. **Abbreviate social titles with full names and surnames only.**
Mr., Mrs., Ms., Messrs., Dr.
(*Ms.* is not an abbreviation but is treated as one.)

2. **Abbreviate titles, degrees, affiliations, etc., after names.**
   Mr. George Harrison, Sr. (*Jr.* and *Sr.* are set off by a comma.)
   Mr. Timothy Wright II (no comma)
   Elizabeth Connor, Ph.D.
   William Hart, Esq. (not Mr. William Hart, Esq.)

3. **Spell out titles when used with the surname alone.**

Superintendent Adams	*Governor Thomas*
Delegate Dugan	*General Washington*

4. **Spell out** *Reverend* **and** *Honorable* **only when preceded by "the"; otherwise abbreviate** *Rev.* **and** *Hon.*
   the Honorable James Welsh (Hon. James Welsh)
   the Reverend Martha Gardner (Rev. Martha Gardner)

5. **Abbreviations composed of initials should be typed without spaces.**

U.S.	*B.A.*
U.S.S.R.	*Ed.D.*

   EXCEPTION: Space between the initials of a persons name.
   W. E. B. DuBois

6. **Initials that function as shortened names of organizations and governmental agencies should be written without periods or spaces.**

MSDE	*NEA*
MSTA	*LEA*

7. **Spell out the first mention of the name of an organization or agency. If an abbreviation or acronym for the name will be used in subsequent references, place this abbreviation or acronym in parentheses after the first full reference.**
   The local education agency (LEA) is responsible for scheduling the test. The LEA will report students' scores to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) by June 1.

8. **The full number of a year is sometimes abbreviated.**
   the class of '87
   fiscal year '85 (or FY 85)

NUMBERS

1. **In general, cardinal numbers (one, three, 16, 22) under 10 should be spelled out; figures should be used for 10 and over. All ordinal numbers (first, fifth, twentieth) should be spelled out.**
   He is 16 years old and in the eleventh grade.

2. **Numbers ending with six or more zeros should be written as a combination of figures and words except in statistical data, where they should be entirely figures.**

text	*30 million*	statistical	*30,000,000*
	1.5 million		*1,500,000*
	$3 million		*$3,000,000*

3. **All numbers beginning a sentence should be spelled out.**
   Three thousand seven hundred and four students attended.
   IMPROVED: More than 3,700 students attended.
4. **Year numbers and page numbers are set in figures.**
   44 B.C.
   See data on page 3.
5. **Spell out indefinite numbers.**
   the early seventies
   NOTE: *1870s*
6. **Figures should be used for units of measurement and quantity in scientific, technical, or mathematical text.**
   4 miles
   45 pounds
   10 picas
7. **In referring to money, the general rule applies: numbers under 10 are spelled out** *(three dollars)* **and figures are used for 10 and over** *($12).* **If figures are used, the "$" precedes them.**
8. **Do not add a decimal point and two zeroes except in statistical matter and in connection with other fractional sums.**
   The book costs $20.

   The registration fee on the day of the conference will be $15.00, but registration before September 15 will cost $12.50.
9. **For a span of years, repeat only the last two digits except when the dates span two or more centuries.**
   1968-73
   1492-1973

PLURALS

1. **When a compound noun is made up of two nouns, the primary element—whether the first or final part — is pluralized.**
   grants-in-aid
   notaries public
   general counsels
   master's degrees

   When both elements are equal, both elements should be plural.
   coats of arms
2. **Pluralize single or multiple upper case letters used as words and numbers (whether spelled out or in figures) by adding "s" alone if this can be done without confusion.**

the three Rs	*LEAs*
twenties	*1920s*
threes	*IQs*

3. **Pluralize abbreviations with periods, lower case letters used as nouns, and upper case letters that would be confusing with "s" alone by adding apostrophe "s."**
   Ph.D's
   abc's
   S's
4. **Data/Strata/Phenomena - Plurals of datum, stratum, phenomenon, they take a plural verb.**

SPELLING

The following list is a guide to consistency in spelling words commonly used by staff of the department. For words not included in the list, consult a good dictionary such as *Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary* or *Webster's New World Dictionary.*

advisor (n.)
audiovisual (adj.)
carry over (n., v.)
carry-over (adj.)
competency-based (adj.)
classroom (n.)
countywide (adj.)
decision making (n.)
decision-making (adj.)
field test (n., v.)
fiscal year 1984 (FY 84)
follow up (n., v.)
follow-up (adj.)
in-depth (adj.)
in-school (adj.)
inservice (adj.)
local education agency (n.)
LEAs (n)
nonpublic (adj.)
on-site (adj.)
open-space (adj.)
part time (n.)
part-time (adj.)
percent (n.)
post-secondary (adj.)
prekindergarten (adj., n.)
preschool (adj., n.)
preservice (adj.)
pre-test/post-test (n., adj.)
prevocational (adj.)
rewrite (v.)
rewritten (adj.)
set-aside (adj.)
statewide (adj.)
subcommittee (n.)
subpart (n.)
systemwide (adj.)
time line (n.)
time frame (n.)
under way (v.)
U.S. Department of Education (ED)
vice president (n.)
vice principal (n.)
voc-tech (n., adj.)
work-study (adj.)

THE OUTLINE

Outlines can be useful in planning and organizing longer papers and reports. At the planning stage, outlines may consist of words and

phrases giving the topics and subtopics, or they may consist of complete sentences. In expanded form, the outline form serves to indicate the organization of a completed final draft.

Regardless of the type of outline, the numbering and lettering should be followed consistently throughout. Below is the standard sequence of numbers and letters used in outlines.

I.
  A.
    1.
    2.
      a.
      b.
        (1)
        (2)
  B.
    1.
    2.
      a.
      b.
        (1)
        (2)
II.

Never use I without II, A without B, 1 without 2, etc.

Punctuation

COMMAS

,

1. **Commas are used between two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a coordinating conjunction (and, but, or, nor, for).**
   The school has many good teachers, but the PTA will select one for its annual award.

   Do not use a comma when the conjunction merely connects two verbs.
   The PTA recognizes many good teachers but will give its annual award to only one.

   The comma is sometimes omitted in short compound sentences.
   The principal returned and the meeting proceeded.

2. **Commas are used after an introductory clause or long phrase.**
   If we respected only what is inevitable and has a right to be, music and poetry would resound along the streets.
   —Henry David Thoreau

Beginning his job as social studies supervisor, he set to work reviewing the county's social studies curriculum.

The comma is usually omitted when the adverbial clause follows the main clause (as in this sentence). It is also omitted after short introductory phrases that are not parenthetical (see 3 below), and sometimes omitted after introductory clauses if the omission does not result in confusion.

At age three she could read better than her brother.

When she was three she could read better than her brother.

3. **Commas are used to set off parenthetical "interrupters."**

School days, I believe, are the unhappiest in the whole span of human existence.

—H.L. Mencken

Consequently, the board decided to conduct a public hearing on the bylaw.

Parenthetical expressions are those that, in spoken English, call for a pause. *For example, in fact* and *on the other hand* are examples of such expressions.

4. **Commas are used to separate words, phrases, and clauses in a series.**

The teacher gave the students test booklets, pencils, and paper.

5. **Commas are used to separate adjectives modifying a noun except when one adjective is thought of as part of the noun.**

It was a hard, long test. BUT: *It was a hard functional test.*

6. **Commas are used to set off appositives, groups of words placed after a word or phrase to identify or explain the word or phrase.**

Project Basic, a competency-based education project, *is now a part of every school in the state.*

Isabel Montoya, the new superintendent, *spoke to the staff.*

7. **Commas are used to set off nonrestrictive clauses or phrases; commas are not used to set off restrictive clauses or phrases. Nonrestrictive clauses and phrases are those that add to the meaning of the noun they follow but are not necessary to identify it.**

Debra and Brian, who failed the functional reading test, *will take a remedial course this summer.*

In contrast, a restrictive clause or phrase is essential to identify the person, place, or thing.

Students who fail the functional reading test *will be given the opportunity to take a remedial course this summer.*

8. **Commas are used to set off elements in addresses and dates.**

The Maryland State Department of Education is located at 200 W. Baltimore Street, Baltimore, Maryland.

We will give the test on October 20, 1984, to all students.

Do not use a comma with only two elements of a date.

We will give the test on October 20 to all students.

We will give the test in October 1984 to all students.

STYLE NOTE

Generally, *that* is used in restrictive clauses and may often be omitted to good effect.

The book (that) I read for extra credit was published last year.

Which is best reserved for nonrestrictive clauses.

Learning for Life, *which I read for extra credit, was published last year.*

SEMICOLONS

1. **A semicolon is sometimes used to separate independent clauses of equal rank where a period could also be used.**

   No boy genuinely loves and admires his teacher; the furthest he can go, assuming him to have all his wits, is to tolerate her as he does castor oil.

   —H.L. Mencken

   Compound sentences in which independent clauses are joined by semicolons can often be improved by rewriting—See Style Note below.

2. **A semicolon is sometimes used to separate two independent clauses when the second clause begins with a conjunctive adverb—however, yet, consequently, nonetheless, therefore, likewise, thus, then, so, moreover, still, furthermore, accordingly, etc.**

   Their approach to discipline was often different; nonetheless, they worked well together.

   A period—but not a comma—could replace the semicolon here. The sentence could also be rewritten by subordinating one clause to the other as suggested in Style Note below.

3. **A semicolon is used to separate elements in a series when the elements themselves contain commas. This use of the semicolon is especially important in clarifying the divisions in a long line of phrases or clauses.**

   Composition is hard because we often must discover our ideas by writing them out, clarifying them on paper; because we must find the right words to convey our ideas, and what we feel about them; and because we must find a clear and reasonable order for ideas that the mind presents simultaneously.

   —Sheridan Baker

We invited a county director of high schools, who has conducted a local study of secondary education; two high school principals, both of whom have been active in the state association of secondary school principals; and a high school teacher with 25 years' experience.

4. **A semicolon is sometimes used before explanatory expressions like** *namely, for example,* **especially when the break is greater than that indicated by a comma.**

   The assessment committee met to discuss the major tasks facing it in coming months; namely, the development of tests in writing and life skills, revisions in the reading test, and the test schedule for next year.

   This sentence could be rewritten by dropping "namely" and using a colon in place of the semicolon.

   STYLE NOTE

   The semicolon as separator between independent clauses should be used sparingly; it gives little hint of the relation between the ideas it joins.

   Because it gives little hint of the relation between the ideas it joins, the semicolon as separator between independent clauses should be used sparingly.

   The semicolon as separator between independent clauses should be used sparingly: it gives little hint of the relation between the two ideas.

   These three sentences express the same thought. In the second version, however, a causal relation is shown by subordinating one idea to the other. In the third variation a colon replaces the semicolon, clueing the reader that what follows is an explanation of the initial statement. Of the three, the second seems to be the strongest.

COLONS

1. **The colon should be used between two independent clauses when the second either (a) restates or (b) amplifies the first.**

   Many teachers moonlight: fourteen teachers from this school are tutors.

   The student team outplayed the faculty: it had more runs, more hits, and no errors.

2. **A colon is commonly used to introduce a list or a series.**

   The State Superintendent visited three elementary schools in Montgomery County: Cedar Grove, Glen Haven, and Highland.

The steps are as follows:

1) Request an application from your school counselor.
2) Complete the application and sign the bottom.
3) Return the completed application to your school principal.

If the list or series is introduced by such expressions as *namely, for instance, for example,* or *that is,* a colon should not be used unless the series consists of one or more grammatically complete clauses:

The State Superintendent visited three elementary schools in Montgomery County, namely, Cedar Grove, Glen Haven, and Highland.

For example: the dance program has 406 students enrolled; the photography course has 210 students enrolled; the creative writing class has 78 students enrolled.

3. **Use a colon between a series and a summarizing clause that follows.**

   Intelligence, education, hard work, and good luck: all these are essential to success.

4. **A colon is used to introduce a formal statement, an extract, or a speech in a dialogue.**

   The legal and philosophical foundation for public education in Maryland may be found in one sentence from the State Constitution: "The General Assembly. . .shall by Law establish throughout the State a thorough and efficient System of Free Public Schools. . . ."

   She concluded her speech with a warning: "We must restore the public's confidence or see the past decade's progress eroded."

DASHES

1. **The dash or a pair of dashes is used to mark a sudden break in thought.**

   There I stood—unable to think or to answer—before the committee.

   Dedicated—that is the best word to describe Tom.

2. **The dash is used to set off a parenthetical element that is abrupt or that has commas within it.**

   The other four areas of Project Basic—Survival, World of Work, Citizenship, and Arts/Physical Education—are collectively called Life Skills.

   On a typewriter a dash is indicated by two hyphens typed in succession and with no space before or after. In setting off

parenthetical elements, the dash is a stronger separator than a comma and places more emphasis on the words set off than do parentheses.

PARENTHESES ( )

1. **Use parentheses to enclose references and directions.**
   The enrollment data (fig. 1) are complete.

   The committee was made up of teachers and MSDE staff (see Appendix A).

2. **Use parentheses to enclose supplementary or parenthetical matter.**
   The school (one of the state's first open-space schools) will be closed in June.

   In this example, dashes could be used in place of the parentheses to add emphasis to the enclosed material.

3. **Use parentheses to enclose numerals or letters marking divisions in the text.**
   The chart was used to show (a) the enrollment in public elementary schools; (b) the number of teachers in each school; (c) the student-teacher ratio in each school; and (d) the number of students in each class.

QUOTATION MARKS " "

1. **Use quotation marks to enclose a direct quotation—the words spoken or written reproduced exactly.**
   "There is one thing that costs a state more than quality education," the commission chairman told the board, "and that is the lack of it."

   Do not use quotation marks for indirect quotations that paraphrase written or spoken words.

   Use single quotation marks to enclose a quotation within a quotation.
   "As the State Board said in its 'Mission of Schooling,' " the Superintendent commented, " 'Reading, writing, and arithmetic are useless without the ability to reason.' "

2. **For longer quotations, usually those of eight or more typed lines, indent the passage and type it single spaced without quotation marks. In typeset material such passages are usually set off by means of smaller type without quotation marks.**

3. **Use quotation marks for titles of articles in periodicals, unpublished works, short poems and plays, short stories, subdivisions of books or other publications, and conference themes.**
   The conference theme was "The Classroom of Tomorrow."
   The Century Magazine *of December 1889 printed a short article entitled "The Evolution of the Educator."*
4. **The following printers' rules should be used with marks of punctuation in quoted words.**
   The period and the comma always go within the quotation marks.
   The colon and the semicolon are always placed outside the quotation marks.
   The question mark, the exclamation point, and the dash are placed within the quotation marks if they belong with the quotation; otherwise, they are placed outside the quotation marks.

HYPHENS

The use of hyphens varies widely. The trend is toward fewer hyphens, using them only when necessary for clarity or to avoid awkward combinations of letters. With frequent use, many compound words once hyphenated are now written as solid compounds (e.g., "audio-visual" has become "audiovisual"). Similarly, frequent use of words in combination may permit writing the words as open compounds when they modify a noun ("middle-school pupils" may be written "middle school pupils").
For questions about specific words, consult a current dictionary or the spelling list on page 11. *See also A Manual of Style, University of Chicago (Twelfth Edition, Revised), pp. 130-36.*
Below are five general principles intended as a guide to the use of hyphens.

1. **Use a hyphen to connect two words serving as a single modifier before a noun.**
   Problem-solving skills are gaining new attention.
   No hyphen is used when the same two words are used as a noun.
   Problem solving is important in mathematics and in life.
   No hyphen is used between an adverb ending in -ly and the adjective it modifies.
   He gave a verbally skillful performance in the television interview.
2. **Use a hyphen to avoid ambiguous and awkward combinations of words and letters.**
   The superintendent will meet with small-school principals to discuss school closings.

(The hyphen connects "small" to "school" and maintains the stature of the principals.)
re-creation (distinguished from recreation)
skill-less
co-owner
re-test

3. **A hyphen is suspended from a prefix to show that it is linked to a later word.**
   Pre- and post-test assessment indicated success by all students.
4. **When they are spelled out, compound numbers from 21 to 99 and fractions of one are hyphenated.**
   Twenty-seven parents came to the meeting.
   Two-thirds of the laid-off teachers were rehired.
5. **Use a hyphen to indicate the division of a word broken at the end of a line. (Refer to a dictionary for proper word divisions.)**

ELLIPSIS MARKS

Ellipsis marks, three spaced periods (. . .), are used to indicate the omission of a word or words from a quoted passage. If the omitted words come at the end of a sentence, a fourth period is necessary.

"I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world. . .that we deny the advantages of learning to women."

—Daniel Defoe (1660-1731)

Clear Writing

AGREEMENT OF SUBJECT AND VERB

1. **Subject and verb must agree in number. Do not be confused by phrases following the subject that are of a different number than the subject.**
   More rigorous training of teachers is one of the recommendations of the commission.
   Training, the subject, takes a singular verb "is"; *of teachers* is an adjective phrase modifying the subject.
   EXCEPTION: *Percent* takes a singular verb when it stands alone as the subject or when it is modified by an adjective phrase with a singular object.
   Eighty percent is the cutoff point.
   Seventy-five percent of the membership was at the meeting.

Percent takes a plural verb when it is modified by an adjective phrase with a plural object.

Seventy-five percent of the members were at the meeting.

2. **The number of the verb is not changed by phrases beginning with** *in addition to, together with* **and** *including.*

   The committee, including the three citizen members, meets each month.

3. *Each, every, either, neither, anyone, someone, anybody, somebody, nobody, no one,* **and** *nothing* **take a singular verb.**

   Each of the applicants is well qualified.

4. **Collective nouns take a singular verb when the group or quantity is regarded as acting as a unit. Collective nouns used frequently by departmental staff are** *department, board of education, division,* **and** *branch.*

   The board holds its meetings on the last Wednesday of each month.

5. **When they refer to a body of knowledge,** *mathematics, physics, economics, linguistics,* **and** *social studies* **are considered singular.**

   Mathematics is her favorite subject.

6. **When a singular and a plural subject are joined by** *or* **or** *nor,* **the verb agrees in number with the subject nearest to the verb.**

   Neither the staff members nor the director is in the office.

AGREEMENT OF PRONOUN AND ANTECEDENT

1. **Use a singular pronoun to refer to a singular antecedent and a plural pronoun to refer to a plural antecedent.**

   Each of the principals has received training in supervising her *teachers.*

   All the teachers knew their *students' names by the third day of school.*

   Strict adherence to the rule can sometimes result in illogical sentences.

   Since each student seemed discouraged by the test results, I tried to cheer him up by telling a joke.

   Rewrite the sentence to restore the logic.

   Since all the students seemed discouraged by the test results, I tried to cheer them up by telling a joke.

2. **Collective nouns usually are referred to by a singular pronoun.**

   The board agreed to hold its *June meeting in Cumberland.*

3. **A collective noun may take a plural pronoun when the sentence clearly refers to individual, separate actions by members of a group.**

The steering committee adjourned to attend their *subcommittee meetings.*

PRONOUN REFERENCE

1. **A pronoun should refer unmistakably and definitely to its antecedent. Avoid ambiguous pronoun references to vague ideas.**

   VAGUE: *Brian arrived late to the game, which caused his coach considerable anxiety.*

   CLEAR: *Brian's arriving late to the game caused his coach considerable anxiety.*

2. **Do not write a sentence with a pronoun that could have two possible antecedents.**

   VAGUE: *The teacher told Mary that she had made a mistake.*

   CLEAR: *The teacher admitted to Mary that she had made a mistake.*

REFLEXIVE PRONOUNS

The reflexive pronoun form myself may not be used as the subject of a sentence or as a substitute for "me."

WRONG: *Joyce Edwards and myself represented our school.*

RIGHT: *Joyce Edwards and I represented our school.*

WRONG: *The letter was sent to the director and a copy to myself.*

RIGHT: *The letter was sent to the director and a copy to me.*

CASE OF PRONOUNS

1. **Use the proper case of a pronoun as determined by its function as subject or object.**

   WRONG: *We will employ whomever receives the highest score.*

   RIGHT: *We will employ whoever receives the highest score.*

   Whoever is the subject of "receives." The whole clause "whoever receives the highest score" is the object of "will employ."

WRONG: *We will cooperate with whomever is appointed.*
RIGHT: *We will cooperate with whoever is appointed.*

Whoever is the subject of "is appointed." The whole clause "whoever is appointed" is the object of the preposition "with."

2. **In selecting the pronoun—who or whom—do not be confused by parenthetical expressions such as "I think" and "he says."**

WRONG: *Laura is the person whom I think will be named to chair the committee.*
RIGHT: *Laura is the person who I think will be named to chair the committee.*

Who is the subject of "will be named" and not the object of "I think."

PARALLEL STRUCTURE

1. **Parallel ideas should be expressed in parallel structure. This means that, with coordinate or equal ideas, use identical grammatical forms: a noun with a noun, a verb with a verb, an infinitive with an infinitive, and so forth.**

WRONG: *At the workshop we learned to identify learning disabilities and about the motivation of learning disabled children.*
RIGHT: *At the workshop we learned to identify learning disabilities and to motivate learning disabled children.*

2. **Repeating a preposition, an article, or an auxiliary verb is often helpful in making the parallel clear.**

UNCLEAR: *I talked to the secretary and treasurer.*
CLEAR: *I talked to the secretary and the treasurer.*

3. **Each item in a list of objectives or similar statements should be in the same construction.**

The committee agreed that the public relations campaign will have three goals:

1. *To inform parents about the school curriculum.*
2. *To inform other community members about school programs.*
3. *To improve school climate and staff morale.*

Note that each item begins with an infinitive.

DANGLING MODIFIERS

Avoid dangling modifiers — that is, those that do not refer clearly to some word in a sentence.

DANGLING: *After convincing him of my expertise with computers, the director hired me.*

RIGHT: *After I convinced him of my expertise with computers, the director hired me.*

TIPS ON CLEAR WRITING

Aristotle called for a "mixed diction." For our purposes, we interpret that to mean a style that balances the precise, distinguished words of our fields of knowledge with the plain words of everyday speech. One test of good writing is to read it aloud. The following tips are given in the hopes that, when read aloud, your writing will, in the words of Wilson Follett, offer "a pleasant combination of sound and sense."

1. **Use plain words.**
   Prefer *increase* to *enhance*, *guidelines* or *limit* to *parameter*.
2. **Use specific, concrete words.**
   The mind craves concrete details and visual images. *Classroom* is better than *learning environment*. "The parents recommended that..." is better than "The parents gave their input."
3. **Use verbs rather than nouns formed from them.**
   Compare "It is my intention" with "I intend." The first is wordy and slightly evasive; the second is direct and convincing.
4. **Use nouns and adjectives rather than verbs formed from them.**
   Set priorities is better than *prioritize*. *To affect* or *to have an impact* are better than *to impact*.
5. **Use modifiers sparingly.**
   Write *important* not *rather important*. And, except in the most extreme cases, write *need* and not *critical need*.
6. **Omit needless words.**
   Write *reviewing projects*, not *in the process of reviewing projects*. Write *reading and math*, not *the areas of reading and math*. The shorter versions are more direct.
7. **Use the active voice.**
   "The board approved the plan" is usually better than "The plan was approved by the board."
8. **Use acronyms and initials sparingly.**
   Overuse of acronyms and initials clogs our writing and confuses our readers. *Local school system* can be used in place of *LEA* and *department* in place of *MSDE*.
9. **Vary the sentence length.**
   Long, elaborate sentences, abounding in clauses and phrases that capture every nuance and subtlety, have their place in good writing. But short sentences have force. They are clear.

10. Revise and rewrite.

Good writing may appear to be the product of facile skill. More often it is the result of hard work—one or more revisions.

NOTES

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